



SIU MEDICINE

July 30, 2019

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**HEALTH FACILITIES &
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD**

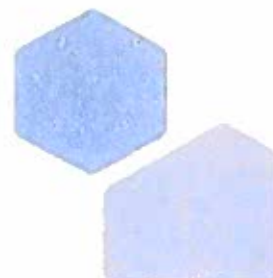
Ms. Courtney Avery, Administrator
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
525 West Jefferson Street, 2nd Floor
Springfield, IL 62761

Dear Ms. Avery:

I write to describe the great partnership that has developed over the years between Blessing Hospital and Blessing Health System (Blessing) and the Southern Illinois University Quincy Center for Family Medicine (QCFM) and its family medicine residency training program, the SIU Quincy Family Medicine Residency Program (administered by the SIU School of Medicine and SIU HealthCare). I joined the SIU School of Medicine as a faculty member in the QCFM in 1984, and have had direct involvement in and a view from many perspectives of this partnership, as the residency program director in Quincy (12 years), as the Chair of the SIU Department of Family & Community Medicine (16 years), and in central administration of the SIU SOM for 6 years, now as Dean and Provost and the CEO of SIU HealthCare, our multispecialty group practice.

The Blessing – SIU partnership has been in existence for 40 years. Initially, the Family Medicine residency program was established through this partnership, and subsequently medical student and physician assistant training has been added, as well as numerous specific collaborations which have benefitted the people and communities of west-central Illinois. In particular, Blessing and SIU have always kept their focus on the Triple Aim plus One – programs that improve population-based health outcomes, lower per capita health costs, ensure universal access, and provide a better experience for patient and provider alike. I will divide my comments into several mission areas:

Education: The QCFM and its Family Medicine Residency program has received financial, facility and philosophical support from Blessing for 40 years. The program has thrived, and has graduated more than 200 family physicians who have become board certified in family medicine.



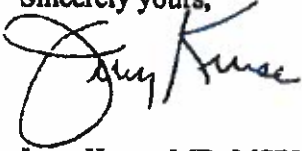
Many have stayed in the area, and now are the heart and soul of primary healthcare and medical care in the region, and many have also assumed leadership positions in healthcare administration. The partnership now has regular educational experiences for pre-medical students and medical students from SIU and Kirksville Osteopathic College of Medicine, assuring a pipeline of healthcare professionals for the area.

Clinical Care: The clinical practice of the Quincy Family Medicine Program is now called the SIU Quincy Center for Family Medicine (QCFM). Blessing has given support to the QCFM over the years to develop extensive, comprehensive programs. The QCFM was the first practice in the area to receive the Level 3 Patient-Centered Medical Home status through the National Committee on Quality Assurance, a designation that, in the partnership of Blessing, elevated the quality of primary care in the region. Over 20 years ago, the partnership established the East Adams County Rural Health Clinic in Golden, Illinois, a clinic that provides the medical care for Golden, Clayton and Camp Point residents. Later, the partnership established the Body Motion Center and the Employer Wellness Clinic, programs that focus on occupational health, musculoskeletal primary care, and sports medicine. In 2017, the QCFM achieved Federally Qualified Health Center status, and since then has partnered with Blessing and Transitions to expand the access to care for mental health services and has also partnered with Blessing and the Adams County Health Department to provide dental care to many people who went without before. All told, these programs provide over 50,000 medical encounters per year in Adams County. QCFM now plans to expand the FQHC model to Pittsfield, where Blessing Health System owns and administers Illini Hospital.

Access to Care: The Blessing – QCFM partnership has produced untold benefits by expanding access to care. In the 1990s, Access Health Adams County was established through a Title III HHS grant to provide access to many residents who had no health insurance. QCFM, Blessing and the Adams County Health Department collaborated to provide this primary care and to assure the appropriate specialty access. The program was eventually assumed by Blessing, and then by the FQHC, to move Adams County toward universal access. Most recently, QCFM, Blessing and the Quincy Public Schools have collaborated to develop a hot-spotting program, which identifies at risk and medically vulnerable families through truancy data bases, and which developed successful community interventions. In another type of collaboration, Blessing has provided facility and financial support for comprehensive mental health service for children under the roof of the Q-FCM patient-centered medical home. This followed the development of the successful program through several federal, state and private grants, and was only sustainable because of the Blessing partnership. This program set the stage for the FQHC application.

All of these initiatives have benefited the public, both individual citizens and many community organizations. Blessing is committed to innovation, education, and the best kind of care for the people it serves. The SIU School of Medicine is proud to be Blessing's partner in these initiatives, and, as I have recently written, the best is yet to come for this partnership.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerry Kruse". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jerry" and last name "Kruse" clearly distinguishable.

Jerry Kruse, MD, MSPH

Dean and Provost, SIU School of Medicine

CEO, SIU HealthCare

Professor of Family Medicine

Professor of Medical Education